

headquartered in Picatinny is managing the development effort for the 165 Excalibur rounds that have been contracted for \$23 million. The YPG demonstration brought the program a step closer toward fulfilling an urgent request to put Excalibur in Soldiers' hands sometime this year.

The projectile's accuracy is better than 10 meters, a figure that represents a huge improvement over existing munitions. Excalibur will be used in Army and Marine Corps howitzers, including the M109A6 Paladin, the M777 Lightweight 155 Howitzer and the Future Combat Systems (FCS) Non-Line-of-Sight (NLOS) Cannon.

"Excalibur will reduce collateral damage, increase friendly troops' survivability and accomplish the mission more efficiently," said COL Ole Knudson, the PM who oversees Army combat ammunition development programs. Knudsen called the YPG demonstration a tremendous success. "Excalibur has been proven at the system level to meet its precision and lethality objectives," he said.

The demonstration consisted of firing an Excalibur projectile from a Paladin 155mm self-propelled howitzer at a target 15 kilometers away. Eyewitnesses said the munition detonated successfully within seven meters of the target. The round was set to activate in "height-of-burst" mode using an enhanced portable inductive artillery fuze setter.

During flight, the projectile "de-rolled" successfully, deployed canards, acquired Global Positioning System signals, calculated the navigation solution and maneuvered itself to the target, which it then destroyed.

The Program Executive Office for Ammunition manages the program with the support of the U.S. Army Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center (ARDEC). A cooperative effort between the United States and Sweden,

An M109A6 Paladin 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer fires the new Excalibur projectile during a demonstration. Coupled with the howitzer's onboard automated fire-control system, Excalibur's enhanced accuracy will make it the munition of choice for the Paladin, M777 Lightweight Howitzer and FCS NLOS weapons platforms. (U.S. Army photo.)

Raytheon Missile Systems and BAE/Bofors Defence Systems formed a contractor team that is designing the munition. Subcontractors include General Dynamics, Honeywell, KDI Precision Products, Interstate Electronics Corp. and EaglePicher Technologies.

Raymond Sicignano is the ARDEC Project Officer for the XM982 Excalibur Precision Guided Projectile.

ALTESS News

ALTESS Customer Support Center

Joseph G. Plott

Acquisition personnel in the program executive and program management offices are continuously under pressure to make quality decisions within stringent budget and schedule constraints. These employees are the acquisition community's tip of the spear for warfighter support. The critical decisions made are fueled by the information from the acquisition database system maintained by the Program Manager Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Enterprise Systems and Services (PM ALTESS) and viewed through numerous end-user applications such as Acquisition Information Management, Web Ammunition, Virtual InSight, Web Army RDA Budget Update Computer System, Smart Charts, Probability of Success, Acquisition Program Baseline, Chief Information Office and Modern Army Recordkeeping System.

Over the years, PM ALTESS has worked to develop, host and merge dozens of acquisition systems into a single database. As PM ALTESS has grown to approximately 87,000 users with its various applications, so has our requirement to provide the acquisition community with timely, high-quality data and support services. Our systems' growth and our desire to provide world-class customer service have enabled us to completely reorganize and redesign our help desk people, processes and infrastructure to create our new "Customer Support Center."

How We Are Reorganizing

As PM ALTESS developed new applications, help desk personnel were placed to support each of those products. PM

ALTESS is streamlining and consolidating these individual help desks into one Customer Support Center. All inquiries and support requests will route to one location — the PM ALTESS Customer Support Center at **CustomerSupportCenter@altess.army.mil**, 1-800-981-3234, or <https://portal.altess.army.mil>. The PM ALTESS Customer Support Center will be your one-stop shop for assistance.

What You Can Expect

The PM ALTESS Customer Support Center will be able to process your requests with an immediate answer or promptly elevate it to our expert teams, as well as track requests from start to finish, obtain Web-based status reports and provide an improved Frequently Asked Questions database — all with a personal touch.

What's the bottom line for you, the customer? Timely, accurate and comprehensive answers so you can continue with your critical mission.

Joseph G. Plott is the team leader for the Customer Support Center at PM ALTESS, Radford, VA.

Worth Reading

Not a Good Day to Die

Sean Naylor
Berkley Books, 2005



Reviewed by Scott Curthoys, a retired U.S. Army military intelligence and foreign area officer, who now is a counterintelligence analyst contractor for a federal agency.

Almost like a right of passage, the United States must absorb a bloody nose in the first major battle of every war before sizing up the enemy and going to work.

It was only after battles such as Kasserine Pass in World War II and the forlorn stand by Task Force Smith during the Korean War that our military leadership began to apply to the battlefield what had previously been an academic

consideration of war. This was the case in March 2002 when the United States went into the Shahikot Valley of Afghanistan in the first significant face-to-face combat with the enemy in the global war on terrorism (GWOT).

Operation Anaconda was designed to block the escape routes through the mountains for Taliban and al-Qaeda forces occupying villages in the valley. The idea was to pin the enemy in place so that Afghan forces (with American guidance) could sweep into the valley and secure the villages. As the American forces landed and moved toward their blocking positions, it quickly became evident that the enemy had the key terrain and was not in the valley.

In his book, *Not a Good Day to Die*, Sean Naylor does an exceptional job of alternately chronicling the failure of U.S. leaders to assemble a coherent and properly equipped force with the exceptional bravery and fortitude of individual Soldiers and their units. *Not a Good Day to Die* is not a memoir, told from the point of view of either a general or individual soldier. Nor is it an analytical account written by a professor of history. Instead, Naylor approaches the story as the outstanding journalist he is by observing, recording the first draft of history in a beat-up notebook, interviewing participants and then reporting the facts in a colorful and engaging style.

Naylor admits that this was “not an easy book to report.” It is also not an easy book to read. It requires patience and more than a little understanding of the military and its particular language. Naylor didn’t write the book as much as assemble it — much like a chef assembling a dish, ingredient by ingredient. For some readers, the first part of the book will be tedious as Naylor attempts to set the scene by introducing a large cast of characters.

But like the recipe for a good dish, each ingredient in Naylor’s book has a purpose. Clearly emerging from this “stew” of characters is the realization that there was little unity of command in *Operation Anaconda*. This lack of a unified command structure stemmed from the parallel efforts of conventional troops and special operations forces in the Shahikot Valley. MG Franklin Hagenbeck, Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division (Light), was the nominal commander of all forces involved in *Operation Anaconda* except those from Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). What Hagenbeck led was a force cobbled together from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and his own 10th Mountain Division. Meanwhile, the JSOC presence included a bewildering array of task forces and teams, including allies, which were connected to Hagenbeck’s effort only through the personal liaison of a few individuals.